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C O N F I D E N T I A L PESHAWAR 000101

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TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PREF](#) [PTER](#) [EAID](#) [PK](#)
SUBJECT: MALAKAND DIVISION: SWAT OPERATION UNDERWAY

CLASSIFIED BY: Lynne Tracy, Principal Officer, U.S. Consulate
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REASON: 1.4 (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. From May 12-14, the Pakistani army continued intensified operations in Swat. There appeared to be an increase of forces on the ground, and a helicopter-borne commando raid into the militant headquarters in central Swat's Peochar valley dominated headlines. Militants in Swat continue to issue threatening messages of retaliation via illegal FM radios. Fighting continued in Lower Dir and Buner, as IDPs continued to flow out of all of these conflict-ridden areas. The NWFP government closed all schools in Mardan district so that they could be used to house IDPs not accommodated by camps and prepared to divert all of the planned development spending in its 2009 budget to IDP relief. End summary.

IN SWAT, OPERATIONS FOCUS ON PEOCHAR VALLEY

¶2. (C) On May 12 and 13, artillery and air bombardment of militant positions in Swat by the Pakistani military continued. Pakistani commandos were inserted by helicopter into the village of Peochar, in the Khwazakhela tehsil of central Swat, where Tehrik-i-Taliban Swat (TTS) leader Maulana Fazlullah reportedly has his headquarters. Unconfirmed reports from contacts on May 13-14 indicated that a top TTS leader, perhaps Fazlullah, had been captured or killed. The Pakistani military announced that it had secured the Chakdara road, between Mingora and Dir. The Pakistani military also announced that it had killed 751 militants in Dir, Swat, and Buner, since the beginning of operations there, against a loss of 29 soldiers.

¶3. (C) Consulate contacts in Swat reported that mobile phones were jammed in Mingora on May 13-14 as ground forces entered the city in large numbers. Press reported that militants were leaving beheaded bodies in public places in the city. Contacts from Swat reported that militants were still on the streets of Mingora in most areas; they optimistically estimated that it would take 2-3 more days for the Pakistani military to secure the city.

¶4. (C) Additional Chief Secretary (ACS) for the FATA Secretariat Habibullah Khan told Peshawar PO on May 14 that militants in Swat were still able to broadcast via illegal FM radios. TTS spokesman Muslim Khan, the ACS said, had been on the radio earlier in the day threatening Swatis. TTS's message was, "we beheaded you in the past, but now we will chop you up in wheat threshers if you continue to cooperate with the government."

The military, the ACS said, was dropping the dead bodies of some militants into their camps as a counter-tactic.

BUNER AND LOWER DIR

15. (SBU) The Pakistani military announced that it had killed 32 militants in areas of Lower Dir near the Swat border on May 13. In Buner, Sultanwas still appears to be under militant control; NWFP Information Mian Iftikhar Hussain told the press that Buner would be cleared of militants "within two weeks."

IDPs

16. (SBU) IDPs continued to flow out of the conflict-ridden areas of Swat, Lower Dir, and Shangla, though the military claimed that some Buner residents were returning to secured areas of that district to harvest the wheat crop. On May 13, National Assembly Speaker and Acting President Fehmida Mirza visited Sheikh Shahzad IDP camp in Mardan district. On May 14, the NWFP government closed all schools in Mardan district on a temporary basis so that the school buildings could be used to house IDPs not accommodated in the existing camps. Ambassador met with Lt General Nadeem, the Pakistani government's designated IDP point man, to review GOP needs and U.S. assistance. (septel).

17. (C) NWFP Chief Economist Shakeel Qadir Khan told Consulate that on May 14, NWFP Chief Minister Hoti had decided that the NWFP government would freeze all development spending for 2009 and reallocate all of the money in that budget to the immediate relief of the IDPs in the NWFP. He said this decision was based on the immense need in the camps and the limited budget support provided to date by the federal government. The federal government, he said, had given the NWFP only 1 billion rupees (USD 12.5 million) so far. The NWFP provincial government has a development budget of 27.4 billion rupees (USD 342.5 million); however, the freeze will affect development projects amounting to almost 40 billion rupees (USD 500 million), as many of the development projects in the NWFP are jointly funded by the NWFP provincial government and the Pakistani federal government or international donors. Shakeel Qadir Khan said that the NWFP would likely announce this decision in 1-2 days.

18. (SBU) According to the Abbottabad assistant district coordinating officer, a delegation of IDPs in Abbottabad district met on May 12 with the district coordination officer (DCO) to protest the lack of any camp facilities there. Most IDPs have fled south, to Malakand, Mardan, and Swabi districts; however, a growing number - particularly from Shangla - are fleeing east, toward Islamabad. Abbottabad is approximately 25 miles from Islamabad. Press also reported 200 IDP families living in public areas in the Haripur district, south of Abbottabad, where there are also no camps.

TENSIONS IN CHITRAL

19. (SBU) Press reported that on May 11, residents of Chitral blocked the primary road leading into Chitral from Upper Dir, in order to prevent the entry of IDPs fleeing from the conflict in Malakand. Officials negotiated a resolution to this blockade; on May 12, residents of Upper Dir blocked the same road in order to prevent local foodstuffs from being transported into Chitral from Upper Dir (which would raise local prices).

110. (U) Addressing the National Assembly May 14, Prime Minister Yousuf Gilani briefed parliamentarians on the government's strategy in Swat, particularly efforts to assist the displaced (IDPs). He announced he would convene an All Parties' Conference on May 18. A "special support group" to help IDPs had been formed; he promised all funds would be utilized transparently, with details posted on a website. He expressed confidence that "the whole nation will stand by our brethren." Gilani also announced Information Minister Kaira would brief the press daily on the situation. Embassy Islamabad reports that the Army will brief political party leaders next week on the military situation in Swat/Malakand.

TRACY